

Title: The ISNA Mental Health initiative: Mission, goals, and first steps

Focus Area(s): Administration/Leadership; Curriculum & Instruction

Abstract: The ISNA Mental Health initiative was created after discussing the existing efforts of Muslims to address their community's mental health and identifying additional areas of need. Thus far, this team of academics, providers, and community leaders have developed their mission, values, and strategic goals (<https://hq.isna.net/isna-mental-health>), and identified the steps they will take. These will be discussed to solicit attendees' feedback before embarking on this journey to enrich the mental health world of North American Muslims.

Proposal: The mental health of Muslims, particularly in the West, has become a greater focus today due to various studies showing poor mental health and low service utilization. Many factors have been recognized in empirical studies as contributing to the current circumstances, including a social environment rife with Islamophobia and discrimination, low knowledge of mental health and available resources, high cultural stigmas around mental health, and a lack of culturally and Islamically informed providers. With the Graciousness of Allah, the number of Muslim academics, providers, community members, and organizations that have been working to address the needs of their communities has rapidly continued to rise. Their significant efforts have included conducting research studies on Muslims' mental health, rediscovering the mental health efforts of Golden Era Muslims such as Al-Balkhi, developing and providing Islamically-integrated therapies, providing access to supportive therapies as well as evidence-based treatments to address mental health disorders for those in need, developing academic programs and institutions, educating the lay community, and creating databases of Muslim providers and related efforts to facilitate access to care for Muslims. Nevertheless, many of these efforts remain disjointed, and others are often focused on individual or organizational

growth, to the detriment of the greater good. In response to a growing need, the ISNA Mental Health initiative hopes to create a unifying platform to elevate the efforts of Muslim communities and mental health organizations, and to fill in the remaining gaps where possible, to support the mental health resilience and needs of the entire North American Muslim community. As noted on the ISNA Mental Health website (<https://hq.isna.net/isna-mental-health>), the mission, values, and strategic goals statement recognizes that mental health exists along a spectrum, that Islamic and cultural beliefs and coping strategies can be impactful, and that creating openness to mental health for as many community members as possible necessitates centering their narratives while ensuring our obligations to educate them and serve their mental health needs are met to the best of our ability. This presentation will discuss our mission, values, and strategic goals statement and process to arriving at it. Further, the presentation will discuss the logic model developed by the team to achieve our strategic goals. This model delineates short-term outcomes, inputs and resources needed, activities we will be engaged in, and expected outputs, and will direct our future efforts. The logic model has similarly been informed by the academic, clinical, and community expertise of the team and is therefore limited by what we believed the appropriate scope of the project should be and on what is most achievable and impactful given our resources. Ultimately, however, this effort cannot be successful without collaboration from the Muslim community at-large. Thus, attendees will be given the opportunity to reflect and comment on the proposed logic model, suggest additional areas of need, and discuss perceived pitfalls as we embark on this important, timely, and novel effort to support the mental health of North American Muslims, bi ithn Allah.

Short Biography: Salman is a clinical psychology Ph.D. candidate at the University of Miami, where he founded the Muslim American Project (www.map-um.com). He is currently

completing his pre-doctoral internship at the Philadelphia VA hospital. Salman recently accepted an NIMH T32 postdoctoral fellowship in Implementation Science at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine

(<https://www.med.upenn.edu/cmh/training#PostDoctoralFellowshipinImplementationResearchinMentalHealthandSubstanceUseTreatment1>) where he will continue leading efforts to end stigma and increase access to effective mental health care for Muslims, both locally and globally.

Photograph:

